

# FINE FEATHERS

by WEBSTER DENISON

NOVELIZED FROM EUGENE WALTER'S DRAMA BY THE SAME NAME

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A terrific arraignment of the "get-rich-quick" idea that has become almost a national calamity. How a happy home was transformed by a pretty woman's natural longing for costly apparel and luxurious living.

## CHAPTER I.

### Paradise on Easy Terms.

Young Mrs. Reynolds sat on the steps of her new bungalow, a home of her own with all the conveniences of a city apartment—gas, hot and cold water, modern plumbing. Only fifty minutes from Herald square, yet removed from the strife and turmoil of the crowded metropolis. A place to rear children where they could romp and play. Close to schools and churches. Excellent markets. Half an acre of ground to raise her own vegetables and chickens. A fine view of the bay and plenty of good air. A spot to live as God meant her to live. Only five hundred dollars down and the rest the same as rent!

Glorious aggrandizement of suburban life; vivid picture from the land-shark's brush. The painter struggles to express on canvas the subtle power of nature; with what facile flow of verbal coloring does this other artist reveal its charm!

Jane wanted a home and so did Bob, her husband, and, with their limited means, that meant a home in the suburbs. At the first inspection of this modern Elysium the agent persuaded Reynolds to invest. What better could they do, he argued. The pretty little house, new and clean and so easy to care for. And the land; why, that alone was worth the price. Think of the saving a garden would mean and what a joy those new-laid eggs! Jane, somehow, was not riotously enthusiastic, but Bob was and she acquiesced. The task of moving had fallen to her, for her husband's duties kept him at the office even on such a momentous occasion as this.

"Oh, if the vans would only come," she sighed. "What in the world can have happened? It is four o'clock and they promised to have them here by noon."

Down the road, the one that the Utopian Land company's map dignified as Sunset street, there appeared a vision of hope. A soiled, swaggering, red-faced, blue-aproned vision.

"There's one of the movers now," exclaimed the young wife. She advanced to meet him.

"Goodness, what makes you so late? Mr. Green said you'd be here by twelve o'clock. How will we ever get moved in tonight?"

"That's what's bothering me, madam. The trucks are down at the entrance to this paradise and Rockefeller himself doesn't own enough gasoline to get them up through the sand. The boss said they was finished streets. They're finished the way they were when Staten Island was discovered, but that's all. We've been trying for hours, putting boards in front of the wheels, but it's no go. I've got to get teams from somewhere. That'll be extra. That's why I came up to see you. Is it all right?"

"Oh, I don't know. I guess so. You'll have to settle that with Mr. Reynolds. But for mercy sakes do anything necessary to get us moved in. I've waited here for four hours."

"We'll do our best, ma'am, but it'll take some time yet. And I don't hanker after many of these Staten Island jobs."

Mrs. Reynolds went back for another inspection.

"It is pretty," she said, "but it's a little lonesome. If they would only hurry! And I do wish Bob could have got off. He would have stirred those stupid men up some way."

She had spent the hours of her long vigil planning a place for all their goods and chattels. She had as complete a picture of the ensemble as a stage manager has of his setting. That ought to expedite matters, she thought, when the furniture did come.

After what seemed another interminable wait she sighted an approaching wagon. It was an ordinary truckman's cart such as is used in construction work. It was piled high with bureaus, tables, chairs and boxes in a jumbled, anomalous mass that suggested many breaks and scratches.

"This is the best I could do, ma'am," called the driver, as he brought the load to a halt at the door. "There

ain't a moving van within five miles and it'd be dark before we got one. But we'll get you in all right."

"Oh, do be careful, won't you?" she answered. "I wouldn't heap things so."

Startling feats of prestidigitation and the energy moving men are wont to display when their task is nearing an end soon disposed of the load. The contents of the last wagon were disappearing when Reynolds arrived. He had had a hard day at the office and a tiresome trip on subway, ferry and trolley that seemed doubly long because of the suspense. But he bounded into the house like a schoolboy and, ignoring the presence of the movers, clasped his wife in his arms and implanted a resounding kiss.

"Hello, honey," he cried as he released her and stood surveying the room. "Isn't this great? A castle all our own!" Then—as he looked at her—"and a tired, dirty, but beautiful little queen. And she is just going to sit down and not stir another time until slaves have done her bidding and served her a royal repast of—"

"Bologna and potato salad, my lord?"

"Don't you believe it. Look, Jane."

He unwrapped a package hurriedly and disclosed a two-pound sirloin.

"That's good for tired muscles and this for tired nerves. Sparkling Burgundy fresh from a Staten Island brewery. We're going to have a regular house warming and I'm going to prepare it."

"Let's get everything in first, Bob. That's the last load. Did you see what they brought it in?"

"Yes, where's the van?"

"They couldn't get it up here. You'll have to settle with the men. They said there would be an extra charge for the wagon."

He went out to conclude negotiations. Presently he called her:

"Jane, come out and look over the estate. I bought some seeds and I'm going to start a garden tomorrow. And see, dear," he said as they looked arms and strolled down the path, bordered on either side by a new, scraggly box hedge. "I brought something for you."

From a bulging pocket he drew out packages of seeds and bulbs.

"Flowers of all kinds, honey!—juncos, hyacinths, daffodils—"

"Why, foolish," she interrupted with a laugh, "they won't grow this year."

Then, as she saw his crestfallen look: "But never mind; did some bad man impose on my little city boy? We'll plant them and just make them grow. What are these? Nasturtiums, pansies, sweet peas—that's more like it; and I'm just crazy for a whole bed of salvia."

And so they talked and planned and selected the sites for the beds, and Jane, who was much better versed in such matters than her urban husband, told him what would have to be done with the soil, a barren, sandy formation that would scarcely nourish a sunflower.

He ran into the house for his garden seeds, a whole array of the suburbanite's delights from radishes to musk melons. He had enough for a small farm. By the time they had decided where the domain of practical husbandry should end and that of the flowers begin, it was dark.

"If the lord chancellor of my culinary hosts pleases, I'm hungry," she informed him. "Let's kill the fatted sirloin and make merry. If all those seeds of yours grow we'll have to turn vegetarians later, so we had better whet our appetites on beef."

"All right," he told her as they reached the veranda, "you just sit here and when dinner's all ready I'll announce it."

But in a minute he had surrendered and was calling her.

"Where in the world are things, Jane? The kitchen utensils, I mean. I've opened three boxes and I haven't struck anything but books and linen."

They found the needed box under two trunks and a pile of pictures. He got it open and led her back to the porch. He cleared the table and set it and then he was back to her again.

"The icebox is locked, Jane. Have you got the key?"

She found it in her bag.

"Oh, Bob," she said in tones presaging real calamity, "there isn't a bit of bread."

"Never mind, I'll get some," he answered. "There's a store right down at the car line."

"But that's three blocks. Maybe one of the neighbors would help us out in an emergency."

"I'd rather not ask the first day, I'll only be a minute, Jane."

Soon after he returned she scented the welcome aroma of coffee and a broiling steak and in a minute he called her.

With a kitchen towel stuck under his collar and a face as red as a stocker's he held a chair for her and bade her to the board.

"There, how is that, my lady?" he asked proudly. "Could the Waldorf's famous Oscar do any better? Eat, drink and be—"

"Sleepy," she finished for him. "I just know I'm going to collapse right here when my hunger's satisfied, for Bob, I'm tired, and it's such a job to put up a bed."

"I'll fix that, honey. Never felt better in my life. Why, if I had a lantern I'd go out and start my garden after I get you tucked away."

They sat over the coffee talking and planning.

There was a knock at the door.

"Good Lord, who's that?" said Bob. "It's nearly nine o'clock!"

"I don't know, but if it's Dick or any of your friends I just know I'll insult them, Bob. I'm nearly dead."

"Sh-h," he answered. "I'll go."

"Good evening!" said a cheery, though rather high-pitched voice as he opened the door. "I saw you moving in and I thought I'd drop around to see if there was anything I could do."

I'm Mrs. Collins from up at the next cottage. Bungalow, James called it when we came here, but that was two years ago."

"It's awfully kind of you to call," said Reynolds. "Things are in a terrible mess here, but you won't mind, I'm sure."

He offered her a chair. Mrs. Collins opined she wouldn't mind. Her appearance buttressed her assertion that she usually took things as they were. She looked an easy-going, buxom sort; of good figure, but slightly passe otherwise as to personal charms and concomitant adornment. Her skirt of black serge was tight fitting and rather modish in cut, but soiled in places. Her white shirt-waist was open at the collar and tucked under, revealing a throat full and round, but red. Her hands matched this color and were coarse in texture. Her abundant hair was her chief attraction. It was done up in pompadour fashion and floated wildly here and there like some intrepid amazon's. But it, too, despite the magnificence of its growth, could not escape the general tone of dowdiness that embraced the whole; for, in the greater part it was a light gold, but in intervening strands and at the roots it showed a darker hue. Her eyes were clear blue with dark brows and lashes. Here nature had been neither cheated nor cajoled. Mrs. Collins' eyes, if all other clues were abandoned, pointed the way to past beauty; beauty not extant, but clouded; crossed by the lines of life; hard life; tollsome life. Mrs. Collins was forty-five and she looked her age. Granted luxury of servants, social pleasures, mental irresponsibilities and milk baths, she would have passed for thirty.

"Do you like it here?" asked Jane, who had now come forward and met her caller.

"Well, James likes it. Little old New York and a four-room flat was good enough for me, but he wanted a bit of the country, and I put up with it for his sake. But, don't let me discourage you, dearie," she added quickly as she detected a slight waning of the younger woman's smile. "It has its attractions here, too. It is mighty fine for children, only—we haven't got any."

"I must meet your husband," Bob declared. "I guess we are kindred spirits. I wanted a bit of the country, too, and a place I could call my own. Does Mr. Collins have a garden?"

"Oh, Lordy, yes. That's what he calls it, anyway. His specialty is potatoes that mostly don't amount to much. But he gets plenty of fresh air and exercise hoeing them and I guess that's better for him than polishing somebody's brass rail with his boot."

"How about flowers?" asked Jane. "Don't you enjoy having them?"

"Goodness, child, I don't find much time for flowers, though I am mighty fond of geraniums. I had a bed of them the first year, but I found that the water here was more useful for washing dishes. Potatoes, you know, don't need any watering, so I leave the gardening to James."

Mrs. Collins arose. "Well, I'll be going, dear. I know how tired you are after a day like this. Don't forget, now, if there's anything you need in the morning, just run right over."

The store won't be open Sunday and you are sure to have forgotten something."

Jane came forward again with extended hand. "That's awfully good of you, Mrs. Collins," she said cordially. "I will certainly take advantage of your offer."

"It's only human," her new neighbor answered. "People have got to stick together in places like this. When we came the only neighbors we had were mosquitoes and bullfrogs. The mosquitoes were friendly enough. They called around right away, and we could hear the bullfrogs at night. They kind o' made me homesick, for I'm awfully fond of frog legs. But the butcher would laugh at you if you asked for them here. Once when I did get James to bring some home I didn't enjoy them, for I felt like I was a cannibal, eating my next-door folks. Good night."

Reynolds opened the door for her and as he closed it turned quickly and took his young wife in his arms. Their nearest neighbor was obviously friendly, but also disquieting. Her attempt at cheerfulness was tinged with an evident atmosphere of discontent. Her impressions of their environment amused, but jarred also. He felt that Mrs. Collins was not exactly the person he would have chosen to initiate his wife into the charms of their new abode. But he made light of his impressions.

"We don't mind mosquitoes and bullfrogs, do we, honey? Let's clear away the dishes and then I'll rig up a place for welcome slumber. There is sure work here and tomorrow won't be a day of rest for us."

## CHAPTER II.

### Dick Brings a Hostage.

In Staten Island it is spring. Nature beckons. Across the bay from old Manhattan come new hosts to taste agrarian joys. Bob is happy; James is in his glory. Seeds are sprouting in the garden. A bed of radishes have thrown up their green shoots, the first harbingers of the season. Pale sprigs of early lettuce are peeping out. Beneath the glass frames of the hotbeds Jumbo tomato plants are creeping upward. You can almost see them grow. Fine sticks supporting empty packets mark the site of embryo beets, peas and kohi-rabi, and here is a row of poles for the delicious lima bean.

Back in her wire prison the Plymouth Rock sings and cackles, and beside her another fusses and scratches for her brood of fluffy chicks. On the porch of the Reynolds' cottage a canary trills and warbles, answering the chatter of myriad sparrows. In the kitchen Jane's song drowns the clatter of the dishes. Music is in the air; life is in the blood. Even Mrs. Collins has ceased to grumble. It is spring!

The Reynolds' dinner is for three tonight. For the first time since their coming the new home is to receive an urban caller.

"Good old Dick," said Jane as she set his place at the table. "I do hope he won't disappoint us."

Her fear was groundless. Dick Meade would not disappoint her, for he was an atom in the great legion of the unattached; a bachelor and alone. He had not formed the habit of declining invitations to dinner. Dick was a reporter on a morning newspaper in New York; a political reporter with a leaning toward socialism and a leniency toward drink.

Poor, blue-eyed, boyish Dick, with a panacea for all earthly ills except his own; champion of the downtrodden, but one of them; an aspiring St. Patrick longing to drive out all the hydra-headed serpents of monopoly with a wand of words; a dreamer of dreams, but lovable, withal, and a staunch friend. He and Reynolds were almost opposite types and this very difference in their lives made them companionable. Dick, also, was not blind to the attractions of his friend's young wife. She was a charming hostess, he thought. The dulcet harmony he found in this home often lulled his own feverish philosophy, or, at least, upset it.

Jane heard them approaching now and hurried out to the veranda.

"Welcome, stranger," she said after she had escaped from Bob's embraces. "You have almost forsaken us."

Dick responded with a laugh and an obsequious bow. "Never, fair one; I have merely been conserving resources that I may pay toll to corporate interests en route. Thirty cents for the round trip, Jane. Enough for Wiener schnitzel and two pilseners. Besides, I bring tribute to my island queen. See!" He held up a pasteboard box punctured here and there with airholes that he concealed. Jane took it from him.

"Something alive!" she cried as she tried to peer into one of the apertures. She ran into the house for scissors and returning, cut the string. Within there peered at her from two sleepy, light-blinded eyes, a fox terrier puppy, diminutive and finely marked.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

There is no darkness but ignorance. —Shakespeare.

# INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

By E. O. BELLERS, Director of Evening Department, The Moody Bible Institute, Chicago.

## LESSON FOR AUGUST 30

### A DAY OF QUESTIONS.

LESSON TEXT—Matt. 22:15-22.

GOLDEN TEXT—"They say unto Him, Caesar's. Then said He unto them, render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." Matt. 22:21 R. V.

The title of this lesson suggests more than the portion of Scripture selected seems to warrant. We have seen in previous lessons how the Master condemned and denounced the rulers by his teaching in parables. This led the Pharisees to take counsel how they might ensnare him (v. 15). Three questions were asked, one political, one doctrinal and one ethical. Our next lesson deals with the third question.

### Secret Methods.

I. The First Question, vv. 15-22. This parable of the wicked husbandman (ch. 21) seems to have been clearly understood by the Pharisees (v. 45). While it stung it did not bring them to repentance. The hardening effect of unaccepted truth is one of its most terrible results upon the human heart. The record tells us plainly (ch. 21:46) why these Pharisees were withheld from at once putting Jesus out of the way. They therefore resorted to secret methods and endeavored to bring him into conflict with the Roman government. The Pharisees entered into this plot to entangle Jesus with their most determined enemies, the Herodian party (Mark 12:13). It was a good scheme from their viewpoint to get Jesus to utter something treasonable and then to turn him over to Herod, who was a puppet of Rome. These Pharisees scorned to pay taxes to this same government with which they are now coniving. They began with words of smooth flattery (v. 16). The devil is never so subtle, so dangerous nor so malicious as when he flatters. Apart from Jesus each party would have given quite a different reply to this question. In fancy we can see them as they must have gloatingly exclaimed, "Now we will see him entrapped." If Jesus declared it illegal to pay tribute to Caesar they could at once formulate a charge of sedition against him. On the other hand, for him to declare it proper thus to pay tribute to a foreign government would seem to them for him to deny his messianic claim, according to their understanding of the messianic program. Calling for a Roman denarius, a legal taxpaying coin worth about 17 cents, he asked, "Whose is this image and superscription?" "Caesar's," they reply, and by those words they have caught themselves and not Jesus. His reply was, in effect, "Very well, you accept the money of Rome, you must by that act accept the responsibility which accompanies it." Jesus first of all denounces their hypocrisy and then exposes the folly of their question.

### His Teaching Is Plain.

II. The Second Question, v. 23-33. The rationalistic Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection at all, now try to entrap Jesus by questioning him along the line of their particular doctrine. The teaching of Jesus is plain and unequivocal as to the resurrection of the body and the immortality of the soul. Jesus seems in this reply rather to ignore the first and to strike at the second, which is more fundamental. Their plan of attack was very scholarly and philosophical and was designed to show the absurdity of his teaching and thus by ridicule discredit his standing. It is always a favorite way for those who quibble to imagine a supposititious case and then to put a subtle question. In this case our Lord, by one sentence demolished their well-planned attack. "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God."

The Teaching. Jesus here shows us the true relation of himself and of his people to political questions. He recognizes the authority of human government and it is his will that his followers shall enjoy the liberties or privileges which that government has to offer; at the same time they are to submit themselves to its requirements under one clearly stated condition, viz., God's supreme will. In so far as the laws of the state are just and true and in harmony with the law of God it is the duty of Christian people to support and to obey them. Jesus would ally himself with neither party, thereby avoiding complicity with any measure of evil. We may likewise maintain a similar relationship with God and speak with authority in the correction of abuses, and in the direction of civic and national life.